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A CHRISTMAS STORY.

(From the Lamp.) CHAPTER III.

We had been abroad three years, and Lionel began to wish for home. By some queer coincidence Guy Ducie had found his way to Rome, and there he said something to me which I answered by pointing to my brother. I resolved not to think of my own happiness while he was miserable. Guy went quietly home again, and I devoted myself more than ever to my brother.— He recovered health and spirits, and then began to long for home. Winter was drawing near, and we both wished to be at home by Christmas Eve. We had a pleasant journey. We passed through Germany and embarked at Ostend for Dover. I saw on board the steamer a tall, dark man, wrapped in a large mantle, who paced the deck impatiently. It was evident steam was not quick enough for him. I watched him curiously, for it seemed to me I had seen a face like his before. Those large dark eyes were quite familiar to me. We landed safely, glad to be again in Old England. Lionel and I went to a large hotel on the quay, and there we found the stranger also. In passing the hall Lionel dropped a small parcel; the stranger picked it up and handed it to him, and he so doing read the address upon it.

'Captain Lionel Eyrie,' cried he (my brother still kept his military title.) 'Is it possible you do not know me? Of course, my name is Philip Howard. You are one of my father's best friends. I know May has often mentioned your name and that of your sister in her letters.'

Lionel fairly staggered at this unexpected salutation. I saw a moment's struggle in his face; then he clasped Philip's hand in his own, and welcomed him back to Old England.

In another half hour we were comfortably seated in a bright little parlor of the hotel, where a plentiful table was spread for us.

'Where are you going from here?' asked Philip of my brother.

'Straight to our own home at Deepdale,' he replied. 'And you, Mr. Howard?'

'I am going home. I wish to reach Ferndale on Christmas Eve, for many reasons.'

'It is some time since you have seen the old hall. Many years, is it not?'

'Not so many as you think, Captain Eyrie,' replied Philip, with a melancholy smile. 'I saw you there three years ago.'

'Saw me. Impossible. Why, where—were you?'

'Yes; you and Miss Kate, and my old play-fellow, Guy Ducie; you all three stood together, and sang "Auld Lang Syne." May was by your side.'

'Why, where—were you?' cried Lionel, in great astonishment.

'I will tell you all, Captain Eyrie,' and he began then and there the history of his wild, erring life, his visit to Ferndale, May's entreaties, her prayers, his promise of amendment, his three years' persevering study, and of his resolution now that he was unworthy to return home, and humbly implore that pardon he had hitherto been too proud to ask. 'I am more fit now that I have studied how to take my place as my father's heir. I was a stupid, ignorant boy, before.— May persuaded me to go to college,' continued Philip, very humbly. 'She made me ashamed of myself; she is the very dearest sister in all the world; she wanted me three years ago to come home, and promised to intercede for me; but I would not. I knew I was not fit even for my mother's society then. May opened my eyes. I thought I was a very brave boy, until she showed me I was but a coward to prefer my own self-will to all the world; besides, it has wrought misery enough.' And Philip's eyes filled with tears.

Lionel heard as one in a dream, his lips parted as though he would speak, but no sound came from them. Mastering his emotion by a great effort, he asked,—

'Where did you see your sister?'

'The first day I was at home, I met her in old Jane's cottage on Christmas-eve. I saw her for half an hour in the conservatory.'

Lionel sprang from his seat; he paced the room like a caged lion; his whole frame trembled; his eyes flashed. I never saw him so agitated before.

'What is the matter, Captain Eyrie?' cried he.

'Nothing; only I have behaved worse than any madman. I might have guessed it, blind, stupid fellow that I am.'

'Guessed what? I do not understand you.'

'Never mind me, Philip, you will understand it better some time. You are going to Ferndale to-morrow. Will you allow Kate and myself to accompany you?'

'Most willingly. I should have asked the favor, only I feared you had visitors at home.'

'You,' I cried, 'Lionel, you going to Ferndale?'

'Yes, Katie. You little know how blind and

mistaken I have been.' That evening after Philip had left us, he told me what I never knew until then, the history of his half-hour in Ferndale conservatory. How he had suspected May loved another, and how he had left because he could not endure to see her again.

'Do you think she can ever forgive me, Katie, for daring to suspect her truth?'

'She is a noble girl, and will be merciful, perhaps; but you scarcely deserve it, Lionel.— How could you be so stupid?'

'Ah, how indeed, Kate.'

The next day, Christmas Eve, we went to Ferndale. I do not know if our little journey was a happy one. Philip was anxious, half dreading the ordeal he must pass through, half fearing to meet again the parents he had so cruelly wronged. Lionel was anxious; he feared May would never forgive him. I shared their trouble, but my own heart was lighter than a bird's. I knew Guy would be there, and would ask me again the same question he had done in Rome, and this time I could say yes. It was late before we reached Ferndale. Ah, how that ride reminded me of the one we had had three years before. There was the moon shining just as it had done then; the roads were white and hard, and the air clear and cold. Philip broke down as we drove through the park, and caught sight of the snow-capped turrets of the old hall. Then, as we drew nearer, we heard merry Christmas sounds, and we knew that Christmas was being kept in right good style. The old porter who opened the gates looked at the tall, foreign-looking gentleman who was with us, but said nothing. We told him to fetch Sir John out of the drawing-room, and not say who wanted him. He came to us in the little oak parlor, and welcomed us cordially to Ferndale. He had known nothing of Lionel's affair, or he would perhaps have been less kind. He knew he had been abroad, but fancied it was merely inclination that led him there. He bowed to the gentleman, who sat so still and silent, shaded from the light; he welcomed him to his house; and Philip, oh, Philip rose—I can never forget him. With a passionate cry for pardon, he flung himself at his father's feet and in another moment was clasped to his heart. Could I tell the scene that followed? No, never. I wept for very joy. If you could but have seen the dear square's face, as he gazed proudly and fondly on the handsome, noble looking man before him.— There was no reproach, no word of anger; all was pardon and love. He said they had no guests but Lady Ducie and Guy, so we must come straight into the drawing-room.

'Will it not hurt my mother?' cried Philip.

'No, my boy; said his father; 'joy seldom harms any one.'

So we went in, and there was the same room, just as we had seen it three years ago, with its Christmas evergreens and Christmas tree.— There was Lady Howard, eagerly welcoming us; and there was May, pale and bewildered, but more beautiful than ever. Lionel had gone straight to her; he had muttered some almost unintelligible words, that had almost the effect of turning her into a statue of stone. And then Lady Howard turned to the stranger who had entered with us. Perhaps she read a new strange joy on the father's face; perhaps the mother's heart was quicker to know again the face of her son; and she recognized him, altered as he was, and with a cry of joy held out her arms to him, and the poor wanderer felt once more upon his face his mother's kisses and tears. It was a scene such as the very angels must have rejoiced in, for it was one of peace and love.— We gathered round the yule log, and there Philip told his tale over again. His mother's tears fell fast as she heard that three years ago, her darling had been so near her and she had not seen him. Then Lionel told his story very humbly, but in a manly, honest way, that won his pardon before he asked it. Sir John and Lady Howard were surprised; they had never imagined May liked him. They forgave him freely, knowing that he had already suffered enough. I fancied May would not be long before she followed their example, for I saw some signs of relenting in her sweet face.

And then the waits came again; but our hearts were full. The Holy Child had been good and kind to us all. I saw Lionel draw May to the window; and when she joined us again, I knew my brother was forgiven.

I shall never forget Lionel's surprise when Guy asked his permission to make me his wife. Guy reported to me faithfully every word of the conversation that took place that very Christmas Eve; Guy remarking that all the business had better be done together. Need I dwell on the mother's joy at regaining her son, or to tell how Philip only seemed to live to compensate for the pain he had given her, or how nobly he redeemed his errors. You can imagine it all. This I must tell you. That six months from that day there were three weddings at Ferndale; for Philip married a niece of Lady Ducie's, and

Lionel had found again his beautiful May; but that bright Christmas Eve there was no shadow at Ferndale. The news of the young heir's return spread like wildfire through the Hall and the village; the church-bells pealed out merrily; the village band was out, and played before the Hall door, while the mother sat by her treasure, and looked upon him as one restored to her from the dead. The Christmas chimes rang out, and again we knelt before the little crib. Where can I better leave you, dear friends, than there? Bright, beautiful May, farewell, farewell. Philip, now noble and good as you were once erring and wrong. There before the crib there lies the Holy Child. I pray that Christmas blessings may be showered down on you; and you, dear reader, may the blessings of this holy time be showered upon you; may you help the poor and needy, comfort the afflicted, and share with all who are near and dear to you.—

A cheerful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

CHARLOTTE LAW.

THE CLOCK-MAKER'S WIFE.

(From the Lamp.) CHAPTER I.

Monsieur and Madame Odoul, at the period our story commences, had been lately married, and were in very prosperous circumstances. The former carried on the trade of clock-making on his own account, and, sure of vast patronage, which he conciliated by his uprightness and skill, might be pronounced well to do in the world.— Already he was not only in funds to support his young establishment, but even to lodge monthly a good round sum in the savings bank. M. Odoul, we might further add, was a model tradesman—laborious, sober, economical, never entering a tavern or a tap-room, but taking his recreation in his own house. Here he had a strong inducement, his wife being, so to speak, wisdom and piety personified. Satisfied with attire suited to her position, and desirous to please her husband only, she dressed with more simplicity than elegance; yet she knew how to look charmingly in a plain straw bonnet, muslin dress, and cashmere cloak. Crinoline, it is true, with all those vain and odious fashions which thrive by ridicule, did not then prevail; but there were other extravagances which turned the brains of many a woman whose position and good sense should have preserved from such errors.

Rising early, and being of active habits, the duties of her little household were soon discharged, so that she had a good deal of leisure. She did not, however, lavish it, as many other women do, in reading trashy novels, and dangerous, if not wicked, periodicals; but anxious to assist her husband, and perhaps inspired by Providence, she sat with him, plying her needle, whilst he was occupied in putting in order his clocks and watches, observing his movements so intently meanwhile that she often plunged the needle into her finger, or remained so absorbed in the contemplation of this difficult and delicate craft as to forget to use it. The clock maker, perceiving it, rallied her playfully.

'You are amused,' said he, 'by my work.— Perhaps you may like to learn the trade?'

'Really,' she replied, 'I should have no objection, but that I fear I might weary and cause you to lose your time.'

'You would soon be tired enough of it, little fool,' said he. 'It is not learned so quickly as your embroidery, years of apprenticeship are necessary, and sometimes even insufficient, to make a tolerable workman. But listening to your nonsense has put me out—I know not where I have laid my fingers.'

'Perhaps,' said his wife timidly, 'it is that little piece which you are used to put under this clock at your right hand, that you want?'

'Of a truth, *ma chere*,' replied her spouse, 'you have good eyes, and good memory: I should not say, after all, but you have some vocation. Well, if some fine day I have leisure and patience, which I doubt, I shall take you as an apprentice, on condition that your roast meat is not burned nor our soup too thick and highly-seasoned.'

'Be not afraid,' said Madame, 'that love for your craft will turn my head so much. Moreover, you can only take me on trial.'

'How seriously you take it,' said her husband. 'Did you not know I was but jesting? Occupied as I am, I could not teach an apprentice. But, lo! it is just three o'clock, and I must go to the other end of Paris for a watch which I have promised to finish to-day. The owner, otherwise very estimable, is as exact as my best regulator, and will not admit of a second's delay. Farewell, dear. I shall be very hungry at my return, so remember a double portion for me to-day.'

And so the clock maker proceeded with all speed to his destination.

CHAPTER II.

No sooner was he out of sight than the young

woman took the seat he had vacated, and for some minutes attentively examined a watch which, having been taken to pieces, remained on the work board before her; and then, after some hesitation, she thought she would try to put them together, as she had seen her husband do. First taking a look at her cookery, and then offering a little prayer to the most Holy Virgin for success in a project so purely designed, she commenced her trial. But it was not without mistakes and apprehensions that the little pieces which composed the mechanism of a watch might be broken or slip from her fingers. More than once stopped by something unforeseen, and astonished at certain wheels, the use of which she did not understand, she felt discouraged: the work advanced slowly, and yet time was passing rapidly. 'What would become of her?' thought she, 'if M. Odoul returned and surprised her in an act of curiosity, and almost of disobedience? But, to her delight and joy, after many slow and painful efforts, she succeeded at last in putting the watch together, and as perfectly as the best workman. Satisfied with her success, she took it again to pieces, and had just finished her task when the clock struck six.

'Six o'clock!' exclaimed she, almost bewildered, 'it cannot be possible, for it seems to me that I have not been at work ten minutes. But, the dinner! I fear it is spoiled,' she continued, as she hastened to the kitchen, where, sure enough, she found the soup solid from too much boiling, and the pigeon pie almost burned up.— Just then in came the clockmaker, looking very blank and disquieted indeed, and not seeming, when he sat to table, to notice the mishap which had befallen the cookery. The young wife apologized for it, believing it to be the cause of his gloom, and promised it should not again happen.

'I am not displeased with you, my good Louisa,' said M. Odoul; 'you never give me reason.'

'But you are annoyed, my dear,' said she, 'and do let me into your confidence. Perhaps you may thereby lessen your trouble.'

'Well, then, as we must not depart from truth,' said he, 'I confess, my dear wife, that I am disquieted, and with sufficient reason. Returning from Brignolles, I met my doctor, and as we walked along together, I told him of my frequent headaches, and the weariness I feel in my eyes after a laborious vigil. Thereupon he became very grave, and examining me attentively, said that I should be careful of these symptoms and spare my sight more, for though he would not like, he said, to alarm me, yet he apprehended for me an ophthalmic affection. This news, as you may suppose, has upset me; the thought of being blind at my age is agonizing.'

'Well, dear Joseph, I do not at all agree with the doctor,' said Madame Odoul; 'and the first time we meet I shall not fail to tell him how little obliged I feel to him for thus alarming you. Thanks to God, the faculty are not always infallible; we daily hear of the mistakes of the most skillful physicians.'

'Oh, I know,' said her husband, 'we should not always take their opinions literally.'

'But,' remarked his wife, 'it is not that I altogether deny the skill and experience of these gentlemen, especially our own doctor; but you know he belongs to the school of M. Croaker, and obliges his patients to be over-cautious.'

But whilst thus trying gaily to reassure her spouse, the young wife had her apprehensions that his fears might be too well founded, and it moved her, in combination with her singular attraction, to apply more earnestly to learn clock and watch making.

CHAPTER III.

More and more attentive to her husband's operations, as he labored, Madame Odoul tried to reduce them to practice the moment he was out of sight. And thus often happened, his avocations obliging him to be frequently absent.— After spending an hour or two daily in new attempts at the intricate craft, she in a few weeks comprehended its principles, and was able to take asunder and put together the most complicated timepiece with all the skill of a tradesman. And her prudence prevented her from being suspected, so that she could develop her talent at will.— More than once the clockmaker found a watch cleaned in the morning which he had placed overnight on the table for the purpose. 'This is strange,' he would then say; 'I should wager that I had not touched this watch, and behold it perfectly clean. I know I am forgetful, but if memory continues to be so much at fault, I shall soon forget my own name.' On another occasion, when the same thing had happened, he remarked that perhaps he was a somnambulist, and had arisen at night to labor. His good wife laughed heartily at this; but lest by mystifying him thus she might annoy or injure him, she abstained from executing any jobs of his save on rare occasions. Yet she continued her so called apprenticeship steadily, though secretly. After surmounting the first obstacles, she knew enough

of the art to see that without some direct and positive lessons she could not fully master it.— What was she to do, still wishing (in order later on to give her husband an agreeable surprise) to keep her own counsel? A providential and unforeseen occurrence relieved her from this embarrassment. Some family matters, which would not brook delay, having compelled M. Odoul to leave home for some weeks, he, in order not to disappoint his customers, accepted the kind offer of his old master, who lived retired on his little savings at the Petit Menages, to come daily to his room, and clean or repair such watches and clocks as could not be over until his return.— Madame turned this opportunity to account, for taking the venerable old master into her confidence, and letting him see how far she had advanced in his craft already, the good man, struck with admiration at her capabilities, promised to spare no pains in order to make her a finished artist. He kept his word: an old pupil himself of the illustrious Brignot, he was fully equal to the task; and the worthy young wife, thanks to her dexterity and intelligence, became in a few weeks a perfect practitioner.

Just then her husband returned, and during the course of the ensuing month God blessed their union by the birth of a dear little girl. Their happiness was now complete; it seemed a sort of terrestrial paradise, M. Odoul said, and he expressed his fears that it would not continue.

'Do not entertain these thoughts, dear,' said his good little wife; 'let us enjoy the felicity sent us by God, and only think of thanking and loving Him more. No doubt the cross and suffering will come to us as well as to others; each and every one of the elect must have their share of affliction, but let us hope that the Lord in sending it will give us strength and grace to support it, and pray that He spare us very great trials or lighten them by resignation.'

Though her household duties were now of course increased, still Madame Odoul did not lose sight of her great project; and to keep her hand in practice, as they say, she continued to avail herself of every favorable moment.

CHAPTER IV.

The little Mary Aloysius was about twelve months old, when one afternoon, whilst her mother was at work, and somewhat disquieted because her father had been absent for several hours, she was startled by a great noise on the staircase, followed by a loud knocking at the door. Opening it hurriedly, a woman outside exclaimed, 'O madame, I hastened upstairs to prepare you for a great trial.'

'What trial?' asked the lady. 'Has anything befallen my dear husband? Speak, oh, speak, I beseech you. Tell me, is he killed?'

'No, madame, it is not quite so bad as that, thanks to God,' said the woman, 'but he has been severely hurt.'

'In the name of Heaven, where is he?' asked the poor wife, half dead with alarm.

'He is in a *fiacre*, at the door,' (*fiacre*, a sort of cab used in France), was the reply. 'My husband and another are trying to recover him from a swoon.'

But the good lady did not wait to hear the sentence finished, for she flew down-stairs, and received in her arms her poor husband, who helped by the two men, together with the cab-driver, carried him to his apartment. When extended on the bed, he fainted again, and whilst Madame sought to revive him, the others ran for, and had him examined by, a neighboring physician. A slight bruise on the breast was all the injury perceptible at first, but when a handkerchief, which covered the arm was removed, the hand was found torn and mutilated, as if it had been dragged and pressed in some horrible machine, and blood flowed profusely, until it was dressed and bound up. The doctor, after administering a composing draught withdrew, promising to call next morning with a brother physician to consult as to what might be most expedient for the poor sufferer.

In the meantime an eye-witness of the accident called upon Madame Odoul, and informed her of the particulars. Whilst her husband was returning home very leisurely through the Rue de Vaugirard, he suddenly heard behind the noise of some vehicle, with much screaming and shouting. Looking back, he perceived a horse tackled to a waggon, coming towards him in full gallop, leaving his leader far behind. All fled from the animal's path, much frightened and alarmed. M. Odoul was quite safe as he was walking at the side, but descending in the middle of the street, and just a few steps from him, two children who had been playing, and who fell in the act of running away, and perceiving a woman, their mother of course, shrieking, and ready to fling herself out of a high window in a vain attempt to save them, the good man saw that there was nothing for it but to imperil his own life; so having cleared the distance with a bound, he got between the children and the horse, and seizing the bridle endeavored to arrest the furious animal, but to no purpose; whilst the children